1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

628 [787] to break this spear. If a man's feather headdress or parrot-feather arm streamers fall off during the war period, it is a mokoi's doing.

The Kalpu man knocked off little pieces from the edge of his stone spear head. He chipped it only on one side to make it very sharp. Night had come. Natjimbui's wives slept on each side of him. He lay on his side near a small fire. The Kalpu man, when everyone was deep in sleep, sneaked up to Natjimbui's side and shoved his spear into his body at the base of the ribs. Natjimbui rose on his elbow but did not cry out. Gurnboko's father began shouting. Everyone started crying, and once more general confusion reigned throughout the camp. They cried, "Maringo! maringo!" They thought that an enemy group had surrounded the camp. Someone called, "Djawarlt!" Natjimbui arose to his feet with the spear in his side and gathered up his own spear and spear-thrower. He walked back from the camp and its firelight until he was in the darkness. A Marango clansman called out his name, but he did not answer. He hooked up his spear and threw it at him. He missed. Another Marango came close to him and called his name. Natjimbui speared him in the abdomen. He then turned and walked away from the camp carrying his spear-thrower. His spears were depleted. He walked away and then came back to the fire. He pulled the handle of the spear out of his own body, but the stone head of the spear remained inside. He burned the handle of his spear-thrower [752] until it was red hot, and put it against his wound. This was to make it smaller and so that it would close up properly. He walked slowly away from the fire until he came to the mangrove jungle. He retraced his steps, leaving his tracks in the mud pointing toward the river. He came back from the river walking on the low limbs of the mangrove trees, attempting to make it impossible for his enemies to trace him. He came to a dry place in the rocks and walked along the stones and grass to a mangrove creek. He went into the water and then back to a dry place and then crossed another small creek.

Blood was dripping from his wound. He put grass inside the hole. He dropped his spear-thrower for he was growing weak. The tracks went a little farther and were lost. He had not been found at the time the author left the Murngin country. The searching party which had followed the trail decided he must have crawled on his hands and knees so as not to make tracks, and that he had successfully stopped the flow of blood.

A makarata was held, in which Natjimbui's relatives chased the Kalpu.

This is the last episode in the Murngin feud that I followed while in the north. When I left, plots were being formed to continue its eternal flow through the lives of the clans participating in the blood feud. The history of this feud shows clearly that although clan solidarity is of considerable importance, and at times it is even possible that two or more clans may ally themselves for a short period, the kinship system tends to break down these solidarities and make a feud almost the activity of one individual.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

756 784 came along and hit our small one. I fell in the ocean and I was covered with the salt water. I heard those opossum children make noises. I put my hand on my head and they fell down inside the water when I came up. A little after that an old man was sick. 'I am sick inside here,' he said. [He touched his chest.] I looked to see what was inside him but I could see nothing now. My eye was too dark. I had lost my doctor children. I can't see anything now inside people. Everyone says that I have lost my very good thing that I had. It's too bad. I said to all the people then, 'I can't look out for you people any more. I fell down in the salt water and it covered me and I can't cure any more.' If I had fallen down in fresh water it would not have hurt those doctor children of mine."

752 755 *Diagnosing Snake Bite.*—Sometimes it is impossible for a man to determine what has stung or bitten him when he is walking bare-legged through the high grass. The Murngin feel it is always necessary to know what has caused a thing. Magicians are called in to diagnose, of which there are at least two methods. In the southern and more interior clan territories, among such people as the Ritarngo, Djimba, Gunalbingu and Dai, when a man thinks he has been bitten by a snake that has crawled away without his seeing it, he finds a hollow pandanus log. He then takes some blood from the wound, places it on a handful of grass, and sticks the grass in one end of the old pandanus tree. He lights the dry grass, blows on the smoke, and watches to see it come out the other side. The snake spirit comes out of the hole. If it looks around for food the man who is bitten will die. If it hurries away he is certain to live. By the other method of diagnosing a snake bite the magician rubs the injured part with one hand while with the other he holds a long thin grass stalk. The grass stalk is moved around the ground with great delicacy and is raised and lowered a number of times. In time some little particle of earth, a grass seed or a bit of bark, will adhere to the end of the stick. If it is only a grass seed or some tiny minute particle the magician diagnoses the bite as that of a small snake. If it is large, the snake is a large one. This diagnosis is also supposed to cure the injury.

789 *Rain Magic.*—It is not necessary to be a magician in order to make rain. Anyone can do it, providing he follows the correct procedure. No one would attempt to make rain during the dry season, since this is an improper time for it and nobody wants it then. However, if the dry season continues too long a number of people, usually ceremonial leaders of the various clans, attempt to end it. To make rain, a man gathers a large bundle of green grass and fashions a human image of

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

278 757 be treated by magic, which is felt to be much more potent. Some of the herb remedies have magic mixed in with them.

Vomiting and Stomachache.—A nest of green ants is gathered, placed in a water-tight container, and put over a fire to kill the ants and eggs. Water is then poured upon the contents and the ants crushed in the hands so that the acid from the insects becomes infused into the water. The water is then drunk by the person who is ill. If a baby has a stomach complaint he is forced to drink some of this liquid, and the mother's breasts are rubbed with it. The natives say that it tastes much like tamarind bean soup.

755 *Diarrhea or Dysentery.*—One of the treatments for dysentery and diarrhea is to take some of the excrement and place it near a red ant bed. The ants carry the excrement inside their mound. This is supposed to cure a man in a short time, since there is a mingling of the power of the ant bed and of the man.

278 757 *Headache.*—The leaves of the mu-tir (unidentified) are gathered by a woman, and an infusion of them is made and rubbed over the head, face, and upper body of the ailing person. The leaves are rough, and the Murngin say, "This is just the same as rubbing sand over the body. It feels rough. When a man has a headache it is just the same as if he had dirt on his head and this cleans it off."

Sore Throat.—Drinking an infusion of broken-up leaves of the paper-bark tree is supposed to relieve a sore throat; sometimes it is drunk only for the pleasure. The fruit from the ne-urk tree is chewed to relieve a cough.

Heavy Throat or Chest Cold (girri girri).—The inner bark of the stringy-bark eucalyptus tree is chewed and swallowed to relieve congestion.

Tooth- or Earache.—The bark of the small plum tree found in the area is removed, the trunk is put in the fire until it becomes hot, and a portion is placed over the aching tooth or against the ear.

Bungeye (bum-bai).—This ailment is frequent among the natives and goes through a group every few months. Either one or both of the eyes swell and close for three or four days. Salt water is poured on shavings of the plum tree (dangapa). The infusion is then poured into the eyes of the prone patient for half an hour or so.—Bungeye is supposed to be caused by dirt in the corner of the eye, and not by watching anything which is ritually unclean.

278 752 *Granuloma, Yaws, and Wound from a Spear.*—The bark is taken from the tree which produces fish poison, broken up, and placed in

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

278 752 water. The container is put on red-hot stones to heat. When the water has boiled sufficiently to form a poultice the latter is cooled slightly and placed on the sore or wound.

754 Granuloma, yaws, and spear wounds can all be caused by magic. It is thought that a magician can cause them by stabbing a sting-ray prong into the track of his victim while at the same time calling out the name of the object of his magic or by singing one of the black magic songs. It is also believed that yaws in the nose and mouth can be caused by a man's throwing away his nasal septum stick, which is found by an enemy and placed between two branches of a tree that rub together. This smashes the nose piece, and the man's nose and mouth are affected by this process.

755 Sometimes if a man has a yaws sore on his foot a live clam is found and the foot placed over it. The clam is supposed to suck the soreness from it. When a man has been wounded, frequently one of his kinsmen places his fingers in the wound to see if the spear has gone through to a vital spot or not. If he cannot feel flesh at the end of his finger it is believed the man will die.

278 752 *Sting-ray or Catfish Wound.*—A variety of the bush beetle is macerated and rubbed on the wound. "It makes the sore feel quiet and easy." Cockroaches are also used in the same way.

278 757 *Poisoning from Untreated Cycad Palm Nuts.*—Occasionally children are made violently ill or die from eating untreated cycad nuts. The natives attempt a cure by rubbing the hair with the stickers from the leaf of the pandanus.

Ringworm (pur-o-pur-o).—This is "caused from nothing," for, according to Murngin thinking, it is due to a man's scratching himself, no magic being involved. Ringworm is treated by rubbing the offal found in a bees' nest or red ocher on the ringworm scales.

Constipation.—The yellow pollen found in a honeybees' nest is eaten dry. "It acts just like that Epsom salts you have," said my informant.

278 752 *Festering Splinters.*—The splinter is allowed to remain in the flesh until it festers, when it is easily taken out. Beeswax is made into a small splinter and pushed into the hole where the splinter has been. A firebrand is then touched to the end of the wax; this melts the inner part of it and allows it to penetrate farther into the sore. This is done particularly if the splinter is in the foot for it enables the man to walk more easily.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

752 *Infected Wounds.*—Hot ashes or hot sand are placed on the wound to remove the soreness, or a log is heated until it is burning all over, the fire is quenched and the log covered with paper bark; the man lies on it, placing the sore part against it. This treatment is also applied to a toddling child to help him walk better; as soon as he starts walking the heated log is placed against his knees to strengthen them.

11: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1933 OI17 Murngin OI17

136 Though most of the snakes in this district are non-venomous, there are at least two varieties whose bite is deadly. These are the *darrpa* (Port Darwin brown snake) and the *bati kuririmiri* (death adder). The former of these is the more common along the coast, and from the bite of this reptile quite a number of deaths occur. Nothing approaching effective treatment for snake-bite has been discovered by these aborigines, and nothing more futile than that 755 followed could well be imagined. A man who has been bitten is made to sit down beside a fire while another man blows smoke through a hollow branch or dry pandanus stem on to him. As the smoke emerges at the other end of the tube another man carefully watches, and if in the smoke he sees the *mali* (non-material form) of a snake, it is known that a *ragalk* (sorcerer) has brought about the misfortune, and the man will die. If no such form is observed the man will recover. Frequently this ceremony is performed after the man has died, and so merely serves to corroborate a conviction which has already been definitely reached. In such a case imagination never fails to create the *mali* of the snake.

755 752 Another very curious method of procedure is as follows: If a person has been bitten and he is able to capture the snake he does so by pressing a stick upon it just behind the head and then binding the snake to the stick at that point. With the snake thus held he returns to the camp.

There the snake is left until it is seen to pass all the blood it has extracted from the person bitten. When this occurs the person begins to recover, and soon all ill effects have passed away. The snake is now released not killed. If it were killed the person would undoubtedly die also.

755 752 278 For the poisonous stab of a catfish, stingray or other fish a live *borok* (wood cockroach) is taken, held between the finger and thumb, and its inside is squeezed out over the wound. Another form of treatment is to apply the leaves of the *rorgor*, a long trailing plant which grows in the beach sand. These leaves are heated on the coals and pressed upon the wound. For the bite of a *butungor* (scorpion), the creature itself is killed and rubbed on the bitten part.

755 752 Amusing in its childishness is the method of treating pustular sores, boils, or swollen glands. A piece of charcoal is wrapped in a

thin sheet of paper-bark and placed on the sore. This is then bitten either by the man himself or by a companion. The sore, hearing the crunching of the charcoal, learns that some one is fighting it, and so takes its departure.

Bleeding is resorted to in cases of severe headache, and less frequently for backache. For the former a deep cut is made above the brow, usually by a single blow with an iron or flint spear-head. Another method is to take a splinter of glass or flint, and with a flick of the wrist to make a cut in the inner corner of the eye. Still another is to take a piece of *baku*, a trailing cane, split it and shape it to a sharp point. This piece of cane is then thrust up one of the nostrils, and is kept there with the finger plugging the nostril until a throbbing sensation begins. It is then quickly withdrawn, and is followed by profuse bleeding.

For wounds such as those inflicted by iron- or stone-headed spears the male flower stalk of the *woragar* (cicad) is used. This is split open and the soft centre obtained, which is cut into small pieces placed in a *dzakarug*, paper-bark basket, mixed with urine, warmed by dropping a hot stone into it, and then applied to the wound.

The treatment of a man who has been so wounded that his intestines protrude is a crude and gruesome business. A man so wounded sits on the ground while a companion withdraws as much of his viscera as possible and lays it out on the sand beside him. The injured man then takes a deep drink of water, and all present watch to see if any of it escapes from the parts visible. If no leakage is observed it is presumed that the man has suffered no internal injury, and his organs are washed and replaced. Certain plants are then obtained which may be used either singly or in conjunction. These are *dirrbuk*, a small carrrot-like root, and *lauwarr*, a kind of grass. These are pounded between stones and then inserted through the wound into the abdominal cavity in order to keep the organs in position. If neither of these plants are to be obtained, almost any substance may be used.

The external wound is then painted with white clay and a dressing made of *warrkarr*, the bulb of a large lily, is applied, after which the man is bound round with strips of paper-bark. Nothing

11: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1933 OI17 Murngin OI17

752 278 is done to remove the substances inserted into the man's body, and my informants are quite positive that he carries the grass, *etc.*, about inside him until his dying day.

752 When a man is speared with a barbed wooden spear great difficulty is often experienced in extracting it, particularly if the wound be near some vital organ of the body. If speared in one of the limbs the spear is usually pushed right through and withdrawn at the side opposite to the entry. In the case of a body wound this cannot be done, so the spear is cut off close to the body and a dressing [278] of *dʒalkor*, tree orchid, is applied, after which the man is bound with paper-bark. This dressing is said to penetrate along the spear-head and loosen it. When, however, I asked how long it would be before the spear could be withdrawn the reply was *Bamantha. Narnak barrpamiri.* (A long time. When the flesh becomes putrid.) It would therefore appear that the " medicine " does not help matters very much.

752 278 Burning owing to the habit of sleeping in close proximity to fires is of very frequent occurrence, and is treated in the following way. If the skin be not destroyed an orchid stem is crushed between the teeth until it is soft and glutinous, and then dabbed on the affected part. If the skin be badly broken the burn is painted with *miku*, red ochre.

757 278 A variety of preparations are used for ulcers, yaws and similar diseases. One is to cut open the stem of a *gunga*, pandanus palm, and obtain the pithy centre, which is pounded up, mixed with urine, and applied hot. Another is to get the gum of the *warndua*, blood-wood eucalypt, dissolve it in water and paint on every couple of days. Yet another is to scrape off the under bark of the *barnggor*, black mangrove. This also is mixed with water and painted on the affected parts. For applying these preparations a small green stick is taken and the end crushed between the teeth until it forms a rough sort of brush.

757 An interesting method is followed in the treatment of the raised sores which often accompany yaws and which appear most frequently on the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet. A person suffering from such a sore goes out on a reef or sand-bank when the tide is low and finds a *yanungani*, sea anemone, which is lying open. He

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

CHAPTER FIVE

Jungle Lore and Etiquette

.103 Our front door overlooked an alluring crystal-clear stream where it joined the sea. When I asked what the name of the Yirrkala camp meant, I was told: 'Oh, that is the water where the camp is made.' This beach by the sea was a favoured camping-ground and scores of Yulengor drank from the stream. A white man drinks from a bush stream by cupping his hands, or by blowing away the dust on the surface and putting his lips to the water; but Yulengor flip the water into their mouths. Out in the bush, when we were hot and thirsty, we came to a small soak in the hills, whereupon most of the men wandered off for strips of paper-bark or large green leaves from which they drank after deftly twisting them into drinking cups. Scores of these saccules lay around the soak, where they had been used at other times.

Apt terms describe methods of drinking. 'Wiaktun' is used of the baling of a canoe, which is accomplished by throwing the water out in a shell or the cupped hands; and the same word is applied to tossing water into the mouth. 'Dthurara-luptun' is a word-picture of drinking with the lips in the stream, for 'dthurara' is a doorway, river-entrance, or human mouth, and 'luptun' is the present tense of the verb 'to wash'.

In spite of the constant use of spears and the skill necessary in handling them, accidents do occur. Marjirry, a lad of about sixteen, one day left the station for a day's hunting. He stalked a kangaroo and speared it, but missed all the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

vital organs, and it made off into the scrub. He followed the wounded animal, and in the ensuing scuffle was himself seriously wounded, and had his thigh laid open by the protruding spearhead. However, he killed the animal and cooked some of it to take back to camp, and propped the rest in the branches of a tree. When he came limping into camp, his friends saw the blood and asked what had happened. Some of them went off to get the meat, but his closest relatives said with characteristic and genuine feeling: 'We will not eat that meat; it has Marjirry's blood on it.' It was clearly a case of 'mumbakuta' and the spilt blood had to be ceremonially washed away and his body purified by washing in a totemic well. Marjirry's father began the ceremony by declaring: 'No one is to eat that meat except my son's wife and children; it is mumbakuta.' He scooped a hole in the sand resembling his horde's totemic well, and when the rest of the kangaroo arrived, the closest relatives ate it, carefully buried the bones and skin in the 'well', and lit a fire over it so that the camp-dingoes could not desecrate them.

By the end of the next week Marjirry felt better, so his father told him that he must 'wash' and that he would make him 'koota-koota', or ceremonially clean, in their totemic well. Everyone sat by the 'well' containing the buried bones and skin. After some singing and dancing, Marjirry stood over the well whilst the leader 'sang' the horde's thanks to the spirit-Ancestors for restoring him to health. Sand was poured over him, and he washed imaginary blood off his body and smeared himself with red ochre. However, before the affair could be considered finished with, Marjirry again went hunting and brought his first kill to his father, who announced that everyone could eat it, and in the ensuing meal thanked them for having observed the tabu. To break this tabu and eat the victim's food, or use his utensils, is a breach of etiquette and a violation of sacred and personal

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

honour; sickness overtakes the offender, or the father may spear him.

New spears, knives, axes, and canoes are sometimes pronounced sacred and thereby impregnated by tabu. Custom provides for the use of such articles in inter-tribal presentations, and any responsible man may prepare them and paint his horde's totem on them. Nanyan, a youth of the Gerrkee horde, spent most of his time at Yirrkala, and I watched him make a spear and 'declare' it sacred. But the tabu could not be completed till he had killed with it, and when he speared a kangaroo it automatically became tabu to all but the men of his horde. After the meat had been eaten the oldest man present completed the ceremony by painting totemic symbols on it for Nanyan. He prized his spear and used it for a time in hunting; and because it had been ceremonially 'painted', the tabu was under control, and women and children of his own horde were allowed to eat meat killed with it, though on no account could the kill be shared with females from other hordes.

Nanyan later presented his spear to a man of the Kumite horde who had no totemic or marriage link with the Gerrkee. This 'alien' appreciated the courtesy and used the spear freely in the hunt, but only the initiated men could eat the food, the women and children not being allowed to share in the kill, because their horde had no associations with the spear's totemic centre. Finally the spear was formally returned to Nanyan who put it to normal use in procuring food for himself and family.

On patrol I visited a horde camped among the casuarinas near Caledon Bay, and in the evening saw the men return with a canoe loaded with fish. During the unloading I noticed that the women and children deliberately kept away and ignored the splendid haul, and I was told that the canoe

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

If a woman secretly hunted for men's food at such a time, she would bring trouble on herself and relatives, and the species of game she killed would become scarce; when the men caught nothing they would say: 'Some woman must have eaten food here', and within a few hours every woman in the locality would be expected to produce an alibi. The life of her husband would be in jeopardy and sooner or later misfortune would overtake him. In offering condolence to an injured man, sympathizers will observe that, as there seems to be no apparent cause for his misfortune, his wives have probably violated this food law.

In bush camps men have a lot of time on their hands, and if a man strolls into a friend's camp he can be sure of a welcome and a remarkable display of polite consideration. If the host has been fishing, he will share the food with his visitor, totally ignoring women and children in his camp. He will remark that there are more fish if his visitor would care to stay and share them, or, if he shows signs of leaving, the largest and best will be pressed on him and the host may even give him a spear or spear-thrower as well. When I asked why such ostentatious gifts were made, I was assured that it was customary, and that the man sitting alone in his camp, except for his wives and children, is inordinately pleased when a friend visits him, and the gifts help to express his goodwill and friendliness.

On the other hand, aboriginal farewells are never prolonged. At the conclusion of a visit, or when leaving the home camp for an extended period, the men continue their discussions till the women, children, and dogs have started out. Men then terminate their visit by nonchalantly remarking: 'I'm finished; I'm going.' Nothing more is said on either side, and they leave.

'My word, Naratjin, you have a fine boy there. He has

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

755 collecting shellfish, and to cure the child he had pummelled the stomach, subduing the parasite and sucking it out in an invisible form.

[164] A persistent epidemic of dysentery was making its way through the Yirrkala camp, and in desperation I finally dosed the two hundred occupants with castor oil, had all shelters burnt and a new camp made on the opposite side of the creek. There were no further applications for medicine, which suggested that everyone had recovered, and upon inquiry I was complacently told that there could be no further sickness, for on the night following the castor oil episode, the marrnggit had conducted a magical 'sing' and had put a spell on the mischievous spirit that had caused the trouble.

164 152 Aboriginal stamina in privation and suffering is proverbial, and the wounded exhibit stoicism and endurance beyond belief. Usually the only indication of suffering is in the flexing of muscles and the rolling of the head. Internal complaints, pains, and epidemics are much more likely to prove fatal, for they cannot be seen as can an open wound. 753 Imagination plays a big part with internal troubles, and the victim, thinking he is under an evil spell, prepares to die.

825 Yulengor have great fear of venomous snakes, and to show their contempt for non-venomous and edible varieties they insert the head upside down between their teeth and dislocate the vertebrae by jerking down with their hands. In Arnhem Land there are two varieties of venomous brown snakes in addition to the death-adder; although they are not as numerous as might be expected, they are by no means uncommon. One afternoon when I was burning a fire-break round an eight-acre paddock I killed seven death-adders. 752 Snake-bite can only be treated by first capturing the snake. 755 A forked stick is held behind its head and is later replaced 825 by the string by which it is suspended from a tree. On no account must the snake be killed, for if it is even injured the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

victim will surely die. Hanging the reptile is part of the cure, and it is thus held hostage for the life of its victim. If the man recovers, the snake is released. It must not be killed even after the man's recovery, for if it were killed the victim would suffer a relapse and die. 752 755 825

Young Geitbapoi was bitten by a snake, and his mother saved his life by capturing the snake and hanging it in a tree. The snake appeared to be dying; the boy's condition also grew worse, and death was expected. But the snake passed a lot of what was said to be the boy's blood, and this was incontrovertible evidence of the reptile's recovery, and likewise its victim's. Therefore the snake was released, and in an hour or so the youth stood up and walked.

Power to kill by magic belongs to an evil witch-doctor known as a 'raggalk', who waylays the man and causes a deep sleep to fall on him so that he may squeeze blood out of his heart. Despite this, the victim lives an ordinary life till the raggalk decides to finish his work by sending a snake to bite him. As with ordinary snake-bite, the raggalk's victim tries to find the snake, to effect a recovery, but such a search is never successful, for the raggalk whisks away his instrument of death. For this reason, when a snake cannot be found after it has bitten someone, the injury it has inflicted is attributed to a raggalk. A marrnggit, or benevolent witch-doctor, can prove that a man has been bitten by a raggalk-snake by lighting a small smoke-fire, seating the man near it and blowing the smoke over him through a hollow pandanus palm-stem. In the curling smoke he sees the spirit of the raggalk emerging from the victim; he announces the name of the killer, and adds that nothing can save the life of the man. 754 752 [756] [787]

Scorpions, stingray, and jellyfish are numerous, but their stings, though extremely painful, are seldom fatal. Scorpions attack women as they dig for yams among the stones on hillsides, and it is said that the groin or arm glands swell 752 [36]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

752 painfully when a limb is stung. They apply a counter-irritant in the form of a string ligature above and below the wound. Further treatment is given by lighting a fire on wet sand and applying the heated sand to the spot. A third popular theory is to catch the scorpion and squeeze its body juices over the wound.

[136] Stingrays in warm northern waters vary in size from twelve inches in diameter to several feet. I well remember the night when we were two miles off-shore in a canoe and were startled by the splash of a huge black monster surging from the sea some twenty or thirty yards away. Waves from its crash tossed the canoe, and the boys did not allow closer inspection, but madly plied their paddles, for fear of an attack. A wound from an ordinary stingray is extremely painful, and I have known the poisoned barb to be driven through the thickest part of a man's hand. A black wood-[825] beetle, like a cockroach, forms the basis of the cure, and is squeezed into the wound; later, several of the beetles are pulped and plastered over it. In serious cases the plaster is mixed with the crushed tubers of a trailing vine from the sand-dunes. Simpler and speedier relief is obtained by applying hot moist sand.

[136] The Portuguese man-o'-war is well named, and is the [165] worst variety of jellyfish in the Arafura Sea. It has caused the deaths of many children. Youths normally able to bear [152] excruciating pain fall on the beach and scream in agony after brushing against a Portuguese man-o'-war. Its long trailing feeler, invisible in sea-water, carries many small cells charged with poison darts on springs. Delicate triggers hold these in position, so that once the feeler touches an object, the triggers automatically release their paralysing darts. Small fish are paralysed and drawn up to be consumed. Feelers can be quickly rubbed off the body with sand, and probably the Yulengor treatment of applying hot sand does this and also affords some slight relief.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

Sharks attack nomads, and inflict shocking injuries; crocodiles crush arms and legs. Bad wounds from these sources are treated with yellow hibiscus bark beaten into a pulp and applied every few days. In the case of bone-fracture, a few thick grass stalks are bound on as splints, and the hibiscus pulp is applied on the outside. The bark pulp is left on a wound till the pain and odour demand attention, and then both splints and pulp are renewed.

Even a simple break in a bone probably knits crookedly; when a compound fracture is suffered, if gangrene does not kill the patient, pieces of bone work their way out of the limb. Wounds become so painful, that further applications of the irritating grass and bark cannot be borne, and they are then left to Nature to flood and cleanse them with copious streams of pus. I saw one hunter who had sustained a compound fracture above the wrist from a crocodile. After a long course of Yulengor treatment, six inches of his forearm bone had dropped out, and the wound had healed. But thereafter he was unable to control his hand, and it flapped uselessly by his side.

An adult with a stubborn open sore will search at low tide for a large anemone, and place the sore in the centre of the soft mass. The anemone automatically contracts, and the patient then tears himself away and has a new, clean, bleeding wound which may heal without further treatment. A child suffering from stubborn sores is treated by its mother, who collects slug-like shellfish (*Onchidium*) and squeezes the juices into the sore. I am told that the juices cause a stinging sensation, as iodine does.

Back injuries are ineffectively treated by tying bush rope tightly round the body in the region of the pain, and intense pain is eased by applying hot wet sand. 'Charlie Sitdown' became paralysed from the hips down, but his misfortune did not prevent him from becoming influential and astute in his dealings. In time he obtained three or four wives and

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

752 a family, and I have known him to roam by canoe for as far as one hundred and fifty miles with his wives, children, and dogs.

Women and children receive extensive fire burns; infants turn over in their sleep and roll into the fire and are shockingly injured. I saw one child's foot burnt so that the top of it grew along the shin, and the toes were missing. Another man had rolled into the fire and had burnt the skin off half his abdomen, and in the prolonged healing process the skin had formed a natural pouch, of considerable dimensions, in which he carried tobacco.

Burns are sometimes immersed in brine from evaporating tidal-salt-pans; a far less painful method, however, is to squeeze into the wound the moisture from the decaying [824] swamp-rush, 'rarkai', and bind on the rotting pulp. Less severe burns are smeared with glutinous sap from an orchid stem, which seems to provide a temporary, flexible skin.

[518] Camp quarrels and head-splitting go together, but blows which would kill a white man merely crack the skull of Stone Age man. It is said that when the skull is wounded in several places, one operator grasps the head in his hands and presses it firmly together, and another binds it with string.

Before treating abdominal spear wounds a patient is examined to see that his vital organs are intact. A freely bleeding wound is allowed to congeal of its own accord, but if the blood continues to flow or spurt a flat wooden spear-thrower is heated in the fire and thrust into it. I do not know if this is intended to cauterize, but many tributes [824] are paid to the method. Hot water is poured into the opening and yellow hibiscus bark-pulp is plastered over it. At the end of three days the plaster is removed, the bark of two other trees is mixed with the hibiscus and inserted in the wound, and white clay is plastered over the poultice. If intestines protrude from a wound, a test is made to see if they are pierced. Water is given to the patient, and if none runs

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

out it is assumed to be worth while patching him up; his organs are pushed inside and the hot spear-thrower, bark-pulp, and clay-plaster treatment is applied.

Severe constipation, with distended stomach, is known as 'or wah', and for this the leaves of a dry jungle tree are mixed in water and the fluid rubbed over the body. Crushed leaves are inserted in the nostrils and piled on the chest whilst the remaining fluid is poured into the ears. It is said to be essential for the patient to remain supine, so as to allow the fluid to run from the nostrils and ears down through the spinal column into the stomach. A second method is to make a meal from a long, spiral shellfish (*Cerithieder Telescopium telescopian*) found on the mudflats. It is good food at any time, but it is also regarded as a cure for constipation, in aiding the passage of fibrous foods; it has the smoothness of the oyster and looks like glutinous slime.

A third treatment is carried out by building a low platform of sticks, covering it with swamp grass, placing the patient on top and covering him with sheets of paper-bark. A fire is made under the structure from the wood, leaves, and bark of the 'boit' or iron-wood tree. This particular tree is always used for the fire. (It is the hardest wood I have seen, and when it is being milled severe irritation is caused to both nose and throat.) The patient spends most of the day on the grille, and from time to time is turned over; at sundown he is removed and plunged into a nearby creek or waterhole. Most assuredly he can expect to feel stimulated.

Diarrhoea is not a common ailment, for natural wandering habits reduce the danger of infection. Nevertheless, epidemics do occur, maybe through over-eating a good catch of turtle, or through hunger driving the food-gatherers to eat decomposing fish or meat washed ashore. A succulent herb, 'brokpili', found near fresh water swamps, is then crushed and mixed with water, and the rusty red mixture

757 [824] is swallowed, poured over the body, and into the nose and ears. It is said to be a purgative.

752 Toothache is unusual, for teeth are strong and well developed and are constantly exercised in masticating tough meat and fibrous foods. It was explained that if a tooth were to ache so badly that a kangaroo catch could not be eaten, the tooth would be treated, to temporarily quieten [824] it for the feast, by packing around it shavings from the wood of the 'moinjortj' tree.

757 Severe coughs and colds are seasonal and are aggravated by dipping the patient in a creek or by pouring water over [824] him to ease an accompanying fever. Coughs are also treated by sipping a mixture from the inner-bark of the stringy-bark eucalypt and a sweet grass soaked in water. Nests of green tree-ants are dropped on hot coals to stupefy the insects so [825] that they can be collected and soaked in water. Their particularly high content of formic acid remains in the water, and the mixture is renowned as a cure for a cough. A further potion is made from the greenish, high-smelling wax in wild-honey nests, which is mixed with water. It is said to taste like certain patent cough remedies and to produce a mild stinging sensation in the throat. When colds have settled in the lungs, a fire is made from pandanus palm nuts and covered with leaves and wet sand; water is poured over the sufferer, and leaves and hot sand are piled on him. It is said that the sickness is sweated out, and that the evil [753] spirit 'jumps out of his mouth to escape the heat'.

Headaches seem to be due to constipation, and to relieve them a certain white-ant nest is taken from the mangrove trees and burnt on the windward side of the patient. After inhaling the smoke for a day, he is said to lose the pain, or, to put it more strikingly: 'The sickness escapes from the smoke through his eyes, nose and ears.' Finally, he washes himself with sand or water—and, as an old man naïvely suggested, after listening to my informant: 'He has a smoke.'

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

*793 [617] marry only into another specified malk. Animals and birds assigned by the Women to the malk were accepted as the insignia or 'djungoin' of those marriage-groups.

The earthly paradise on the round hill kept the Women occupied in naming and distributing fauna, and in inaugurating the famous Gunabibee ceremony in which the story of their work and adventures is preserved. [196] In decorating themselves and their totems for the ceremony, they began the present-day practice of drawing their own blood [237] and smearing it over their bodies as an adhesive for the birds'-down so often applied now in strikingly effective designs. ●752 Blood is taken by a process suggestive of barbarism and scientific knowledge of blood circulation. In west Arnhem Land string is tied above the elbow of the donor, who closes his hand and alternately bends and straightens his arm till the veins show up. One of these is nicked with a shell or spear-head, and by bending and relaxing the arm the blood is pumped into a bark container. To seal the wound the tourniquet is removed, and a boll from the cotton tree is dabbed over the opening. Half a pint of blood may be removed, and the donor and his friends unconcernedly [413] paint it over their bodies with fibre or human-hair brushes. Before it congeals they apply birds' feathers.

*793 In time the younger of the two Sisters realized that, for reasons unspecified, she was about to give birth to a child. Consequently they searched for a good camp site and found one near a lagoon. After the fashion of women, they had fossicked during the day for food, and had also gathered sheets of paper-bark to cover their hut, so that by the time they came to the lagoon they were loaded down with rolls of bark, and their dilly-bags bulged with yams, goannas, and animals.

The older Woman built the hut and bent sticks into a dome, resembling the ribs of an umbrella, and covered these [415] with bark. Meanwhile, her sister went to the lagoon for